

## Response to Ewell

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Timothy Jackson <shermanzelechin@gmail.com>

Tue, Nov 19,  
2019, 1:33 PM

to Levi

Dear Levi,

It occurred to me that it might be appropriate for the *Journal* to solicit responses to Ewell from a number prominent Schenkerians - if they would be willing to reply - and publish a small collection. What do you think of this idea?

In my view, some of Ewell's comments about Schenker are an example of intellectual dishonesty. I believe that this contention should be - politely - proven, and a "Response" to be justified and appropriate.

The racist passages from Schenker's letters and diary Ewell cited from "Schenker documents on line" were unknown to those scholars he critiques for sanitizing Schenker's published writings. To the point, these comments from SDO were not known by Forte, Rothstein, Rothgeb, and others because they were *inaccessible*, buried in the letters and diary. So, Ewell's critique of these scholars is unfair. But Ewell goes further and pretends that *racist* comments were excised by them from Schenker's publications, while the passages moved into appendices were not racist in content like these items cited from SDO. It is a cheap shot.

In fact, Schenker's strongest vituperation was *never* toward Blacks, but the French, who are and were, especially at that time, mostly White!, and primarily during and after WW I. There are sustained passages in Schenker's diary against the "White" French that prefigure Nazi anti-Semitic propaganda in their virulence.

Schenker's Eurocentrism - perhaps better, German-centrism - was by no means exceptional; it was also common at that time in European culture. It was based on many factors, Kant and German philosophy being one of them.

I read most of Schenker's 5600-page diary in the original before it was on SDO, and the comments Ewell cites about Blacks in particular are extremely rare and marginal at best. That does not excuse them; however, these views were so universal in the early 20th century, and by no means exceptional, that I would have been surprised if Schenker did *not* think in that way. What WAS noteworthy in Schenker was his extreme

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"Volkisch" German Nationalism, and especially his sustained demonization of the French. So, if Schenker was the virulent anti-people-of-color that Ewell makes him out to be, why then did he pick so much on the (White) French, reserving for them his most hateful spleen? His comment about Black French soldiers is taken out of context; it is part-and-parcel of his tirade against everything French, and mostly *White* French.

Part - but not all - of the "dark" side of Schenker's personality was well known to his students and colleagues. Again, the diary and letters on SDO were still sleeping in the archives. However, I think that Schachter told me, for example, that Jonas studied for one year with Schenker when he was 19, but then left him for Weisse because he just could not stand Schenker's extremism.

A topic that comes up in different contexts in Schenker's diary is racism in the context of his and his wife's Jewishness - something that Ewell ignores - and the problem of anti-Semitism. As a Jew himself and as the target of racism, Schenker was keenly aware of both anti-Semitism and racism, and he became increasingly so as the Nazis assumed power in neighboring Germany; yet as the outside commentators on Ewell pointed out, he failed to mention even once Schenker's Jewishness, and that of most of his students, and what this meant, and this lacuna is self-serving. As Schachter pointed out years ago in a talk about Schenker that he gave in Tallinn, Schenker was not a fan of Hitler. This fact reveals that Schenker's views changed and evolved over time, and, especially in response to the rise of Nazism and anti-Semitism in Germany - and also Austria - in the late 1920s and early 1930s Schenker began to sober up.

Ewell's thesis that the practice of Schenkerian analysis cannot be divorced from Schenker's political theory means that the approach must be inherently anti-French, although Ewell fails to point this out, and none of the Schenkerians seem to have noticed it. Or, perhaps, following upon Ewell's conspiracy theory, they do know but are hiding it. Does this undercut our work on Berlioz, Mehul, and other French composers?

At some point I will send more the annotated score of the Saint John Passion.

With best wishes, Tim

Walls, Levi <LeviWalls@my.unt.edu>

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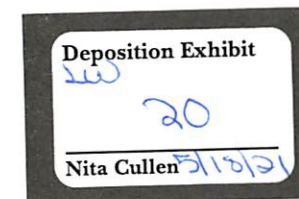
to me

Dear Dr. Jackson,

I agree that a response in the JSS would be very appropriate. It would be nice to have it for the upcoming issue, although it is very forthcoming (around mid-December).

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A response in issue 13 would of course be quite late. Did you have any particular schenkerians in mind? Dr. Graf and I can discuss some candidates tomorrow at our weekly meeting and get requests out as early as tomorrow evening. Perhaps we should also set a page limit for each respondent, though we have room in the upcoming issue, so I don't think there's any need to be particularly restrictive.

Regards,

Levi Walls